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IN U-TURN, GOVT SAYS SANCHAR SAATHI APP IS NOT MANDATORY

Union Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Tuesday in a volte-face said the fraud reporting app can be deleted if users so wish

NOT FOR SNOOPING, SAYS UNION MINISTER

Many opposition leaders and critics viewed the Sanchar Saathi app as a snooping attempt, as they felt it could listen to calls and monitor messages. Scindia stepped in to defuse the crisis and denied allegations that it was an app for snooping. "If you want to delete it, then delete it... it will remain inactive till users register," Scindia said outside Parliament | P11, 16

PHONE MAKERS NOT CHUFFED WITH ORDER

- Some phone makers, such as Apple, were reportedly opposed to the mandate. Apple is keen to discuss the issue with the government for a middle path, as the 'order cannot be implemented in its current form'
- The move mimics a similar mandate by Russia in August, requiring a state-backed messaging app MAX to be pre-installed on all phones

1.5 crore

PEOPLE HAVE ALREADY DOWNLOADED THE SANCHAR SAATHI APPLICATION

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

DKS will become CM when top brass decides, says CM after Breakfast 2.0

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @ Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday reiterated that any change in the state leadership will be decided by the Congress high command, hinting that opinions of senior party leaders Sonia Gandhi and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi will guide the decision.

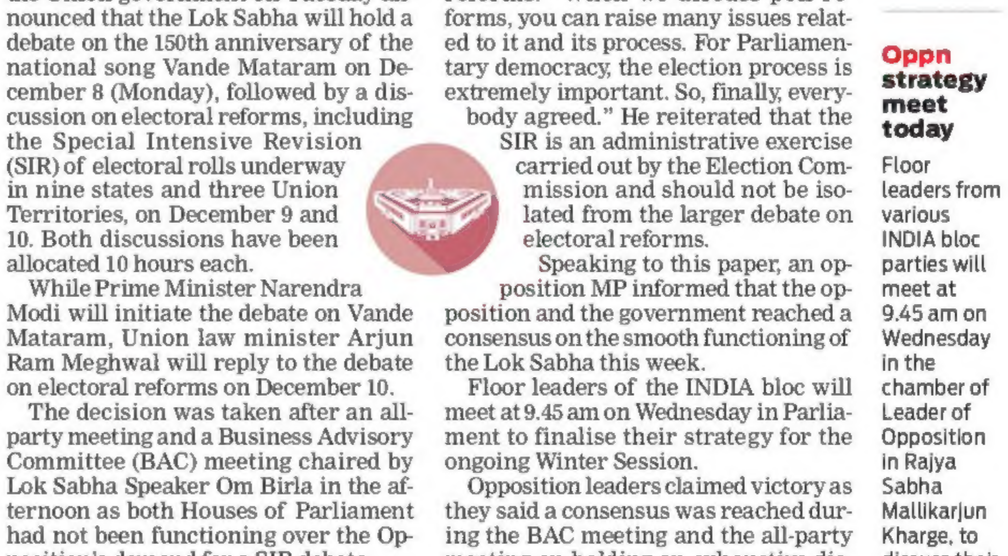
Talking to the media after attending a breakfast meeting hosted by Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar at his residence in Sadashivanagar, he said, "We discussed issues concerning farmers and people of the state in general. We had already decided at the breakfast meeting that I hosted (for Shivakumar) that we would listen to any decision taken by the high command... mostly Rahulji and Soniaji... and Khargeji."

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy CM DK Shivakumar address the media after their breakfast meeting in Bengaluru on Tuesday | EXPRESS

He said, "So far, there has been no communication (from the high command). If they call us, we will certainly go. I am meeting KC Venugopal (AICC General Secretary) at a function (in Mangaluru)," he said when asked whether they would meet high command leaders in Delhi. Even on the cabinet reshuffle, the high command has to decide, he added.

Asked when Shivakumar might become chief minister, Siddaramaiah said, "When the high command decides."

Siddaramaiah and Venugopal are meeting in Mangaluru on Wednesday at an event celebrating spiritual guru Narayana Guru that has been organised by CWC permanent invitee and MLC BK Hariprasad. P4



Opposition leaders K Kanimozhi, Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge and others during a protest against the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, at Parliament complex in New Delhi on Tuesday | PTI

Two-day SIR debate in LS from Tuesday

To be preceded by Vande Mataram discussion on Mon

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

BREAKING the deadlock in Parliament, the Union government on Tuesday announced that the Lok Sabha will hold a debate on the 150th anniversary of the national song Vande Mataram on December 8 (Monday), followed by a discussion on electoral reforms, including the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls underway in nine states and three Union Territories, on December 9 and 10. Both discussions have been allocated 10 hours each.

While Prime Minister Narendra Modi will initiate the debate on Vande Mataram, Union law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal will reply to the debate on electoral reforms on December 10.

The decision was taken after an all-party meeting and a Business Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting chaired by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla in the afternoon as both Houses of Parliament had not been functioning over the Opposition's demand for a SIR debate.

Speaking to reporters, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the special discussion on the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram will start at 12 noon and go on for the full day. On Tuesday, there will be discussion on election reforms. "When we discuss poll reforms, you can raise many issues related to it and its process. For Parliamentary democracy, the election process is extremely important. So, finally, everybody agreed." He reiterated that the SIR is an administrative exercise carried out by the Election Commission and should not be isolated from the larger debate on electoral reforms.

Speaking to this paper, an opposition MP informed that the opposition and the government reached a consensus on the smooth functioning of the Lok Sabha this week.

Floor leaders of the INDIA bloc will meet at 9.45 am on Wednesday in Parliament to finalise their strategy for the ongoing Winter Session.

Opposition leaders claimed victory as they said a consensus was reached during the BAC meeting and the all-party meeting on holding an exhaustive discussion on electoral reforms, the SIR exercise, and the suicide of booth-level officers (BLOs). P11

The discussion can be initiated in either House. We have decided that it will be taken up in the Lok Sabha first

Kiran Rijiju, minister

Oppn strategy meet today

Floor leaders from various INDIA bloc parties will meet at 9.45 am on Wednesday in the chamber of Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, to discuss their joint strategy in Parliament

'JUST & FAIR PLEA'

SC asks EC to try and extend SIR deadline for Kerala

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Election Commission to consider extending the December 11 deadline for submitting enumeration forms in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Kerala by one more week, in view of the ongoing process for local body elections.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi made the recommendation after taking note of submissions that the local body elections in the state will take place on December 9 and 11, and counting of votes on December 13.

"It seems to us that the request is just and fair, and it warrants due consideration by the Election Commission of India," the order said.

The court allowed the petitioners to submit a formal representation to the Election Commission by Wednesday 5 pm seeking SIR extension. It asked the EC to consider the request sympathetically and take a decision within two days.

Senior advocates Rakesh Dwivedi and Maninder Singh, appearing for the Election Commission of India, said the Kerala State Election Commission has already exempted SIR staff from election duties, adding that the SIR deadline had earlier been extended from December 4 to 11.

Terming it a peculiar situation, the CJI said the state government staff should not be overburdened.

EXPRESS READ

Anganwadi workers call off indefinite stir

Bengaluru: Thousands of Anganwadi, midday meal and ASHA workers called off their statewide agitation ahead of a meeting with Union ministers from the state to be held in New Delhi on Wednesday. The strike began on December 1 (Monday) at Freedom Park in Bengaluru and was to go on for 10 days | P6

58 flights from KIA delayed by over an hr

Bengaluru: Multiple flights departing from the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) were delayed by 60-90 minutes on Tuesday, inconveniencing hundreds of passengers. A source from BIAL said the delays were due to "operational reasons" by the airlines | P2

Putin visit to spur trade, mobility, defence relations

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin's visit to India on December 4-5, his first in four years, will anchor a renewed push to accelerate India-Russia economic cooperation with a series of deals spanning trade, health care, mobility, media and economic cooperation set to be signed.

Along with the ongoing dialogue on defence, security space and nuclear cooperation, the visit is expected to place emphasis on narrowing the trade gap. Bilateral trade between India and Russia surged to a record $68.7 billion in FY25, driven by a sharp rise in energy imports. Of this, India exported goods worth $4.9 billion, while imports from Russia stood at $63.8 billion.

Fertiliser imports remain a central pillar of India's engagement with Russia. New Delhi currently sources 3-4 million tonnes of fertilisers annually from Moscow, and both sides are looking to further deepen this supply partnership to ensure agricultural security.

We are looking at the possibility of increasing imports from India

Dmitry Peskov, Kremlin spokesman

A key economic deliverable is the India-Eurasian Economic Union Free Trade Agreement, for which the first round of negotiations took place last year. Officials in the Ministry of External Affairs said the intent is to "have the agreement soon," with the FTA expected to significantly boost market access on both sides.

Another development is the finalisation of a pact on mobility of skilled and semi-skilled workers. This is expected to ease labour movement.

Coinciding with Putin's visit, a two-day India-Russia Business Forum will be held in Delhi, focusing on expanding Indian engineering exports to Russia, scaling up Russian imports of Indian pharma and food products, and enhancing collaboration in digital services. These discussions align with the ambitious bilateral goal of achieving $100 billion in trade by 2030.

Putin will be accompanied by Defence Minister Andrei Belousov and a high-level delegation representing business and industry.

BSY CASE

SC STAYS POCSO TRIAL AGAINST FORMER CM

Apex court issues notice, primarily to consider remanding the matter back to the high court for the next course of action in the case sexual harassment case filed under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act | P4

VANDE J&K

A Vande Bharat Express train runs along the elevated Katra-Jammu track on a foggy morning on the outskirts of Jammu on Tuesday | PTI

Census to be held in 2 phases from Apr '26

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE long-delayed national population census, which will include caste enumeration for the first time, will be conducted in two phases starting April 2026, the Centre informed Parliament on Tuesday.

Responding to a question from Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said Phase I (House Listing and Housing Census) will take place between April and September 2026, while Phase II (Population Enumeration) is scheduled for February 2027, with March 1, 2027, as the reference date.

Snow-bound areas of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Ladakh will be covered in September-October 2026.

In his written response to to another question from Rahul on whether the government plans to publish the draft questions and seek inputs from public or people's representatives, Rai said the Office of the Registrar General and Census commissioner was in the process of finalising the questionnaire. Around 34 lakh enumerators and supervisors will be deployed for the exercise. The timeline has been fixed to avoid clashing with board examinations, Rai said.

The last population census was held in 2011.

Census 2027 will also be done through digital means

Nityanand Rai

PROTECT TREES, STOP MINING

Farmers launch Appiko Chaluvali to save Devadari forest

KIRAN BALANNANAVAR @ Sandur (Ballari)

TO protect over 1,000 acres of forest land in Devadari Hills from mining activities, farmers from Narasingapura and Ranjithapura villages of Sandur taluk of Ballari district have been staging their own 'Appiko Chaluvali' (Hug the Trees) protest for the last one month. The protest began after the state granted land in the area to Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Ltd (KIOCL) for mining activities earlier this year.

The villagers say the hill has already suffered extensive damage due to decades of mining that has led to health issues, loss of forest cover and severe disruption of wildlife habitats. Farmers are now guarding the forest in shifts, while school and college students too have joined the movement. Protesters said they will continue their agitation until December 31, when KIOCL's tender period ends.

Mounesh KB, a local resident and Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha leader, alleged the state government has violated its own commitments by allowing mining in the ecologically rich Devadari Hill, which he described as the "oxygen hub" of Kalyana Karnataka. P4

Farmers from Sandur taluk hug a tree to protect forest land in Devadari Hills from mining activities | EXPRESS

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2	235	Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IITB)	81.4
3	236	Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur (IIT-KGP)	81.3
4	241	University of Delhi	80.9
5	305	Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM)	77.3
6	310	Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK)	77
7	**352**	**Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT)**	**74.9**
7	352	Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee (IITR)	74.9
9	462	Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore	70.5
10	467	Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal	70.3

Source : https://www.topuniversities.com/sustainability-rankings

For further information about VITEEE 2026 scan the QR code

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